

ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of April 9, 2024 Meeting

ACCL, Boardroom, 4:00 pm

Chair Russell called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm. Trustees in attendance are Ms. Russell, Ms. Ritter, Ms. Brickman, Mr. Woods, Mr. Atwater, Ms. Leitch, Ms. Pratt, Ms. Bogue, Mr. Kurtz, Ms. Luke, and Ms. Cox. Absent were Ms. Carter, Ms. Lynch, and Ms. Hall. Staff members present were Ms. Bell, Ms. Price, Ms. Green, Ms. Plaksin, Ms. Mayfield, Ms. Shull, Ms. Calia, Ms. Josey, and Ms. Shimobi-Obijuru.

Announcements: April 8th was National Library Worker Day. Chair Russell announced the resignation of Steven Mason. The ACCUG budget hearing is May 2, 2024 at 6:30pm. Board members and staff are encouraged to attend.

Public Comment: none

Approval of Minutes:

- The draft minutes of the January 9, 2024 meeting were unanimously approved. (motioned by Ms. Brickman, seconded by Mr. Woods)

Approval of Agenda:

- The April 9, 2024 meeting agenda was adopted. Unanimously approved (motioned by Ms. Brickman, seconded by Ms. Pratt).

Financial Report:

In Ms. Lavengood's absence, Director Bell presented Financial Report FY24-Q3 to the Board. Financial Report FY24-Q3 was unanimously accepted. (motioned by Mr. Kurtz, seconded by Ms. Brickman).

Committee Reports:

- **Friends of the Library** - Ms. Linthicum was not present to give a report.
- **Winterville** - Ms. Leitch gave the report. She was pleased to report that the flooring repairs have been completed. The Board will have their quarterly meeting soon.
- **Foundation** - Ms. Bogue gave the report. She reported the Merrill Lynch account at approximately \$2,097,796.00. This figure is up 6.55% YTD.
- **Nominating Committee** - Ms. Cox gave the report. Following the resignation of ACCL Board of Trustees Vice Chair Steven Mason, the Nominating Committee nominates Rainey Lynch to serve as Vice Chair of ACCL Board of Trustees.

(*Action Item*) The Board unanimously approved the nomination without opposition.

Director's Report:

Ms. Bell gave the report.

She began by reporting on Legislative Day at the capitol. She was pleased to report that 17 Board and staff members traveled to the capitol to speak with legislators and legislative assistants about the importance of funding ARLS libraries. Former ARLS Director, the late Kathryn Ames was honored with the Georgia Public Library Lifetime Achievement Award. Board members and staff showed support for Kathy's family. SB390 was not heard. Ms. Bell commented that legislation that would be detrimental to libraries was avoided and we were still able to emerge with strong relationships with legislators intact.

The Public Libraries Formula was funded as usual with updates to the population figures. A 4% salary increase (up to \$3,000) for state funded positions was included, as well as a much needed increase of \$1,628,550 to cover the new SHBP employer share for state funded positions. No additional materials funding was added this year beyond the \$.70 per capita we currently have.

GPLS received \$3 million for MRR (\$5 million was requested), and \$2 million for technology grants.

Ms. Bell reminded Board members of the upcoming ACCUG Independent Agencies budget hearing. A total of \$359,389.40 is being requested, which is more than we have ever requested in the past. As soon as the date is announced, Ms. Bell will share it with the Board. She added that the greater the library's presence is at the hearing, the more impactful it will be.

Director Bell was excited to share some good news.

Working together, Elizabeth Hood and Darcy Calia wrote a grant on behalf of the ACCL Friends. The Friends group was awarded a Google Ad for Nonprofits Grant beginning in March 2024. The grant provides up to \$10,000 each month to create Google search ads for the library, its programs and services, and fundraising events. This grant has helped other organizations drive donations and connect individuals to promoted resources. A Friends member with experience in paid search marketing will assist in using the grant to promote local and regional services.

Ms. Bell provided an update on the passport photo booth. At the end of December, through the hard work of Trudi Green and Librarian Sarah List, the library received a photo booth as an added service to our passport program. The booth costs us nothing, and we receive 30% of the cost patrons pay to have their photos. Based upon previous months, it looks like we can expect an additional \$700-\$900 per month in passport photo revenue!

Congratulations was extended to Heritage Room Librarian, Ashley Shull regarding a recent grant award. Ms. Bell asked Ms. Shull to fill board members in on the good news. Ms. Shull was excited to report that the Heritage Room is a partner on the Increasing Access to Diverse Public Library Local History Collections Nation Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant. We will receive over \$25,000 in digitization and online hosting services! The project, which is on a two year timeline, involves the digitization of 9 local history collections.

Director Bell reported on a meeting she had with ACCUG officials regarding some of the issues the library is experiencing with patron behavior. On December 1st, a team of staff (including security and janitorial staff), Ms. Bell, and ACCUG officials including Mayor Girtz, Police Chief Jerry Salters, and Blaine Williams met to discuss some of the issues experienced daily. Topics included rules and policies for patron behavior, the trash and loitering that accumulates at the "circle area" near the bus stop, and ownership of the circle. Facilities representative, Andrew Saunders said trash compactors would be installed, and this has been done. A possible lease was discussed, but Ms. Bell has not received any updates regarding this. The hiring of a police officer was also discussed. In the past, there was an officer at the library, and staff felt there were fewer issues when an officer was on site daily. Having a Resource Officer on site will cost \$45.00 per hour. We were told that there are no laws against panhandling and that we could not put a "No Loitering" sign at the circle area without a lease.

Board members were given an update on what ARLS is doing to help parents choose which materials are appropriate for their families, while still providing access to our collections. Ms. Bell presented the following three documents to the Board:

- Parental Review Resource Guide
- Request for Reconsideration process
- Request for Reconsideration graphic

She went on to explain that the library system listens to the community and its residents. The library is not political, does not take sides, and does not have an agenda. Accordingly, the library has started a two pronged approach that we believe is a reasonable way to help parents engage with their children on what they are reading.

- We have established a "middle grades" category in the Teen section that is clearly marked "Middle Grades" and the books are labeled "middle grades".
- We have created a Parental Review Resource Guide so that parents will have the ability to read reviews of the books their children bring home.

We believe that these steps will help parents ensure that the reading materials their child has chosen from the library is in line with their own personal family values. Additionally, an in depth request for reconsideration review process has been established.

Director Bell went on to ask for approval to hire 3 summer interns to work in the Children's and Teen Departments, costing the library \$12,000. In the

past, the teen and children's department have benefited from the summer intern help provided and paid for by VISTA. Unfortunately, that program has been discontinued. Both departments have requested additional help over the summer reading months. If approved, the interns will work 19 hours, one for each department, and one split between the two. (*Action Item, Revised Budget*).

Finally, Ms. Bell shared a thank you note from Governor Kemp's office thanking staff for the wonderful gifts and their time and commitment to serving Georgians.

Communications: Board members reviewed the 2024 ACCL BOT Members List and the ACCL BOT Committees List. Chair Russell asked members to send edit requests to Ms. Price.

New Business:

- Regional Board members needed - Chair Russell informed members that Mr. Mason's resignation has created a vacancy on the Regional Board, which must be filled by a Clarke County Board member. Ms. Brickman has agreed to serve as an ACCL representative on the Regional Board. She has also agreed to serve on the ACCL Book and Media Action Committee.

Board Actions

- Approval to hire temporary summer staff - Unanimously approved. (motioned by Mr. Kurtz, seconded by Mr. Woods)
- Approve nomination put forth by the Nominating Committee to have Ms. Rainey Lynch serve as Vice Chair of the ACCL Board of Trustees. - Unanimously approved.

Old Business: none

Adjourn: With no further business, Chair Russell adjourned the meeting at 4:47 p.m. Unanimously approved without opposition.

Next Meeting - October 8, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.